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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000767

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE (PFEUFFER)

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TAGS: PGOV PREL MASS MARR MK KV

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: PRESIDENT ON NAME ISSUE, KOSOVO,  
SECURITY MATTERS, TROOPS FOR GWOT

REF: A. SKOPJE 766

- 1B. SKOPJE 736
- 1C. SKOPJE 698
- 1D. SKOPJE 712

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

#### SUMMARY

11. (C) During a September 19 meeting with the Ambassador to discuss cohabitation challenges (ref A), President Crvenkovski expressed concern that Macedonia might be pushed to the wall in its name dispute with Greece before the 2008 NATO Summit, underscored that there is no difference between Skopje and Washington on Kosovo status issues, and agreed with the Ambassador that recent criminal incidents in the border area with Kosovo did not present a security threat to Macedonia. The Ambassador highlighted the continuing importance for Macedonia of demonstrating a constructive approach and low media profile on the name issue. She also told Crvenkovski that the U.S. would welcome additional Macedonian efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, if that could be done without undermining defense reforms and Macedonia's NATO membership prospects. On the name issue, the best we can hope for from Skopje, if Athens decides to press for a resolution of the dispute prior to the Bucharest Summit, is an offer to engage in confidence building measures via bilateral talks, and a restatement of its dual name offer.  
End summary.

NAME ISSUE -- TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

12. (C) During her September 19 meeting with President Crvenkovski to discuss cohabitation challenges (ref A), the Ambassador also raised the name dispute with Greece and other bilateral issues. On the name issue, she noted that the President generally had in the past acted with restraint in responding to statements from Athens regarding the name and Macedonia's NATO membership prospects. She encouraged him to stick to the high road in dealing with future developments on the issue.

13. (C) The Ambassador advised that it was best to avoid verbal confrontations with Athens and to instead focus on the UN process for resolving the dispute. That would help the USG make the case for strict adherence by both sides to the 1995 Interim Agreement. She encouraged Crvenkovski to

consider constructive actions the country could take to show that Skopje was being reasonable in its behavior toward Greece. It would be important to try to keep the issue out of the media spotlight, which could only inflame the situation.

¶4. (C) Crvenkovski said that, in the aftermath of the Greek elections, Macedonia was entering a "critical period" that would extend to the April 2008 NATO Summit. His main worry was whether UN Special Envoy Nimetz would submit a new proposal during that timeframe which would be unacceptable to Macedonia. If so, he expected Euro-Atlantic attitudes toward Macedonia's NATO candidacy to sour; the country would be blamed for being inflexible on the matter. That outcome would unjustly "feed Greek arguments" that Macedonia was not demonstrating the will to resolve the dispute.

¶5. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on September 20, FM Milososki said that the GOM is considering proposing direct bilateral talks with the Greeks, to supplement but not supplant the UN discussions under Nimetz. The direct talks, to be held parallel to the UN process, could (subject to PM Gruevski's approval) include discussion of confidence-building measures such a bilateral commission on history textbooks in each country's schools. Milososki also said that he had ordered the MFA not to broadcast the latest recognition, by Canada, of Macedonia's constitutional name for use in bilateral relations. Despite the effort, someone outside of the MFA, possibly Canada's honorary consul in Skopje, had leaked the news to the press. Milososki added that the GOM nevertheless would continue, in its public statements, to downplay this development.

KOSOVO -- NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SKOPJE AND WASHINGTON ON STATUS QUESTION

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¶6. (SBU) On Kosovo, the Ambassador said we would keep Crvenkovski and the government briefed on developments as they unfolded. Kosovo elections in November would be a significant hurdle, and we would want Macedonia to continue to play a constructive role as a stabilizing force in the region. It would be important for all parties in Macedonia to avoid speculation on possible status-related outcomes, especially regarding partition concerns.

¶7. (C) The President agreed that Macedonia needed to demonstrate a calm and constructive attitude in responding to Kosovo developments. Talk of partition from any quarter was "dangerous and destabilizing." He assured the Ambassador that there was "no difference between Skopje and Washington" on the Kosovo status question.

¶8. (C) In his September 20 meeting with the Ambassador, FM Milososki volunteered that he has been regularly underscoring to EU members the importance of working for a unified position on Kosovo status, and of the need for a speedy resolution of the status issue after December 10. MFA State Counselor for Multilateral Affairs Svetlana Geleva told us the same day that the GOM hopes for a unified EU position that would make it easier for Macedonia to also follow the U.S. lead when the recognition issue comes up. She said MFA officials also are telling their EU counterparts that the large ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia will make it difficult for the GOM to delay recognition much beyond a U.S. decision to recognize an independent Kosovo. END NOTE.

SECURITY MATTERS

¶9. (C) Referring to some recent shooting incidents and other criminal action in the border region villages of Vaksince and Tanusevci (refs B, C, and D), the Ambassador told Crvenkovski that we did not view the incidents as presenting a threat to Macedonia's security, despite wild local media speculation to the contrary, nor did we think the incidents were linked. We were confident that the Ministry of Interior was able to

operate throughout the country, including in the areas in which the incidents had taken place.

¶10. (C) Crvenkovski agreed that the incidents were unrelated, and that there were no links between the perpetrators and Kosovo, as had been suggested in the local media. Kosovo leaders wanted stability, he said, and would discourage actions by Kosovar citizens in Macedonia that could threaten stability. He attributed the incidents more to the rivalry between DPA (ethnic Albanian governing coalition partner) and DUI (main ethnic Albanian opposition party) than to any challenges to Macedonian stability. He added that neither party had tried to communicate with the communities in the affected areas to determine and help address their basic needs, which were substantial.

#### TROOP DEPLOYMENTS TO IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

¶11. (C) The Ambassador thanked Crvenkovski (who as Head of State is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces) for Macedonia's troop contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan. She welcomed his upcoming October visit to Afghanistan to meet with Macedonian troops serving with ISAF as a positive signal of the country's commitment to democracy and stability in Afghanistan. She added that we very much appreciated the deployments. It was important for Macedonia not to over-stretch its capacities in a way that might undermine defense reforms and the country's NATO candidacy, but if Macedonia were able to contribute any more troops to either operation without a negative impact on those reforms, that would be welcomed. Crvenkovski took the points on board.

#### COMMENT

¶12. (C) Crvenkovski and the GOM share identical positions on the name issue, one of the few substantive areas on which they agree. Neither party has indicated, in any conversations with us, that there would be any flexibility on the Macedonian side in terms of modifying the country's constitutional name if push came to shove with the Greeks (the PM's Chief of Staff told us on September 20 that any

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party here "would commit political suicide" if they changed the name). In our view, the best we can hope for from Skopje, if Athens decides to up the ante and press for a resolution of the name dispute prior to the Bucharest Summit, is an offer to engage in confidence building measures via bilateral talks, and a restatement of the willingness to find a mutually acceptable name for relations with Greece, consistent with dual name approach which the GOM considers its "final offer" in the matter.

MILOVANOVIC